

enforcement access to Federal dollars and will help free up local resources for rural healthcare, education, broadband, and other key services that are, tragically, needed in these areas.

This is a critical bill to help address issues that are symptomatic of a larger problem. Unless we invest time and resources to address the root cause of migration from Central America, we will continue to witness these tragic deaths in our border region.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Brooks County Sheriff Benny Martinez, Jim Hogg County Sheriff Erasmo Alarcon, Jr., and Duval County Sheriff Romeo Ramirez, to name a few. These men have been on the front lines of this issue and continue their work to identify who has died.

I also acknowledge the Southern Border Communities Coalition, the Church World Services, and the Texas Civil Rights Project for their work to raise awareness about this issue and help build support for this bill. Without the support of this large cross section of stakeholders, we would not be here passing this legislation today.

For the families that have lost their loved ones, this bill is an opportunity to bring closure. I know many of you may not find the answers you seek, but there is a much better chance because of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of the bipartisan support for this bill, I request that all my colleagues vote in support of this important effort.

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Mr. Speaker, in closing, while I support this bill, I think Congress must do more to secure our borders.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. SCANLON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, the assistance provided by this bill will help bring peace of mind to the families of missing persons by taking meaningful steps to improve the identification of remains.

I applaud the bipartisan and bicameral support for this bill. I thank Representatives GONZALEZ and HURD for their efforts in the House, as well as Senators CORNYN and HARRIS for championing the bill in the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this bill today, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a senior member of the Judiciary, Committee and a member representing a state on the nation's southern border, I rise in strong support of S. 2174, the "Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains Act of 2019," sponsored by the senior senator from Texas, Sen. CORNYN, and Sen. KAMALA HARRIS, the next Vice-President of the United States and the first woman and person of color to win election to that high office.

I support the Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains Act because it is bipartisan legislation that will help prevent migrant deaths on the Southwest border and will help border counties and nonprofit organizations locate and identify missing migrants.

Mr. Speaker, migrants seeking a better and safer life in the United States who attempt to cross the U.S.-Mexico border between ports of entry are often faced with difficult terrain and extremely dangerous conditions.

The temperature in barren border sections of Arizona's Sonoran Desert, for example, can reach over 104 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer and drop to below freezing in the winter.

Since 1998, the U.S. Border Patrol has reported 7,505 migrant deaths on the border, most due to dehydration, drowning, and exposure to extreme heat or cold.

For more than two decades, over one migrant a day has died while attempting to enter without authorization, a misdemeanor offense under Federal law.

The actual number dead is likely much higher than that, as the statistics only report those who have been positively identified by border patrol agents.

The bodies of migrants tragically lost during attempted border crossings become increasingly difficult to identify after exposure to the desert for prolonged periods.

The continuing loss of life on the border is unacceptable and allowing many of the dead to remain unidentified is inhumane, families of border crossers unsure of their loved ones' fate and depriving them of the opportunity unable to say goodbye.

The legislation before us would create grants for humanitarian and state actors to report and identify missing persons and unidentified remains, including migrant border crossers.

The bill also provides resources for rescue beacons, which have been used effectively to rescue migrants who are in danger.

Mr. Speaker, the Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains Act would authorize the Attorney General to provide grants to various entities to report, process, and identify missing persons and unidentified remains.

Entities eligible for the grants would include state and local governments, humanitarian aid groups, nonprofit organizations, forensics and toxicology laboratories, and medical examiners' offices.

This funding will improve reporting of missing persons to the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) and the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), databases used to identify border crossers who have lost their lives.

Additionally, the legislation authorizes the purchase and implementation of up to 170 self-powered "rescue beacons" in isolated border regions to prevent further migrant deaths.

Rescue beacons are tools used by U.S. Border Patrol in desolate border areas to rescue migrants in distress.

They are 30 to 40 feet tall, solar-powered, and satellite-connected.

They are equipped with a 9–1–1 cellular relay, a strobe light, and a multilingual instructional placard to help migrants alert border patrol personnel to a distress call.

Not long ago, on Christmas Eve, 2017, a distress call from a rescue beacon allowed border patrol agents to rescue a migrant family near Lukeville, Arizona, representing three of hundreds of lives that have been saved by the beacons since they were first implemented in the late 1990s.

As of November 12, 2019, there were 34 rescue beacons situated in desolate border

areas; this bill would increase the total number of beacons by 600 percent.

The bill clarifies privacy protections concerning the use of biometric data in the reporting and identification of missing persons and unidentified remains and provides that any piece of biometric evidence handled by an entity receiving grant funding be used for the sole purpose of identifying missing persons and unidentified remains.

Finally, S. 2174 requires the Attorney General, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) each to submit annual reports on use of grant funding and on programs implemented to save migrant lives and identify the dead.

Mr. Speaker, the Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains Act would make an immediate impact, both by saving lives on the border and by allowing the families of those who have lost loved ones to gain closure.

I strongly support this bipartisan, common-sense reform that would enable the United States to lessen the loss of life on our southern border and treat those dying or crossing between ports of entry with dignity and humanity.

I urge all Members to join me in voting to pass S. 2174, the Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains Act of 2019.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCANLON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 2174, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to the extent provided in advance in appropriations Act, the Attorney General is authorized to use funds appropriated for the operationalization, maintenance, and expansion of the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) for the purpose of carrying out this Act".

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Mariel Ridgway, one of his secretaries.

#### ONE SMALL STEP TO PROTECT HUMAN HERITAGE IN SPACE ACT

Ms. KENDRA S. HORN of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 1694) to require any Federal agency that issues licenses to conduct lunar activities to include in the requirements for such licenses an agreement relating to the preservation and protection of the Apollo 11 landing site, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 1694

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*